

Emotional Vampires



By **PATRICK WANIS PH.D.**

Almost every one of us has someone in our life whom we wish we could change or whom we wish would change; desiring them to do things differently or to be different. It might be a boss, coworker, colleague, team member, friend, family member or worse, a romantic partner.

Understanding that we cannot change anyone (except ourselves) is step one to inner peace. Step two is to understand yourself and others. Step three is change yourself. Step four is clear out of your life those people that are parasites or bring you down. A client of mine was relating to me that all the women in his life expect him to support them (on many levels) but they never support him. I explained to him that there are only two types of relationships: parasitic (one person living and feeding off the other person) and symbiotic (the two people mutually supporting and benefitting each other.)

A parasite can feed off you mentally, emotionally or energetically. I refer to these people collectively as emotional vampires. And when you are around them, you may feel physically tired, drained, sleepy, weak, agitated, low, small, inadequate, low spirits, hopeless, trapped or afraid.

IDENTIFYING THE EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES

There are many types of emotional vampires:

Narcissist, Controller, Victim, Criticizer, Drama Queen

Please note that I always avoid labeling people, and so, the above terms refer to a person's behavior and approach to life. Labeling people robs them of their power and in turn, can give them a reason or justification for their behavior i.e. "I can't help it; I am ADD." My intention here is to help you to:

1. Identify the way people in your life can drain you, (hold you back, rob you of your power, confidence and potential)
2. Understand the emotional vampires and their behavior
3. Become empowered by offering you some basic strategies to best handle, deal with and respond to those behaviors and people.

Narcissist This person needs and demands constant praise and attention. He ignores your feelings and interests; believes that the world revolves around him or her, and almost always tends to turn the conversation around to discuss him or her. You often feel invisible and pressured to compliment and praise him.

Victim This person is extremely needy; often has a story of how the world has wronged him; has many "accidents" and "bad luck"; wallows in self-pity and misery. You often feel like the parent and therapist to him.

Control This person dictates and dominates you; he or she is rigid, rarely fun or spontaneous, often telling you what is best for you and how you should be living your life. You often feel weak and trapped around him.

Criticizer This person is highly critical, condemnatory and judgmental. He puts others down often and easily points out your flaws. You often feel inadequate around him.

Drama Queen This person needs to be center of attention 24 hours a day; he or she is great at getting attention and when he doesn't get it or his way, he creates drama and outbursts believing that the intense emotion is a healthy connection. This person can also be passive-aggressive: seeking your approval and charming while he has it, but aggressive and abusive when he

doesn't get it. When you are around this person, you feel like you are walking on egg shells, hiding your true feelings and riding an emotional roller coaster.

UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES

All of the above behaviors stem from negative experiences and programming. In other words, the emotional vampires feel empty and are missing something and thus they turn to you to fill them up with: validation, recognition, attention, approval, love, acceptance, reassurance, personal power, etc. No matter how confident and assertive they may appear, underneath, they often suffer from self-hatred, low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, guilt, shame and so forth.

HANDLING THE EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES

1. Mentally and emotionally separate yourself from their behavior:
"I understand that the way others respond to me is about them"
2. Determine if it is possible to end this relationship - cut them off from your life
3. Become aware of how you feel around this person (creepy, tense, scared, weak, tired, trapped, shut-down, tight chest, etc) and if bad feelings arise, do your best to remove yourself from the setting as soon as possible (before the person can begin to drain or impact you)
4. Always respond with "matter-of-fact" tone and approach; maintain your calm and composure by listening but not allowing their words or behavior to enter you; imagine an impenetrable golden light around you
5. Breathe deeply before speaking back
6. Remind yourself that it is their intention to get a reaction from you
7. Limit your interactions with them as much as possible - avoid socializing
8. Firmly, clearly and openly state your limits and boundaries
9. When experiencing their tantrums and outbursts, imagine you are dealing with a five-year old child
10. Express compassion and empathy but place your limits

TIPS TO STRENGTHEN AND EMPOWER YOURSELF

The better you feel about yourself, the less you will attract or be affected by the emotional vampires, and the easier it will be to protect yourself and say 'no' to them. In other words, build your self-esteem, clear out your stuff (doubts, insecurities, negative emotions, etc.) Avoid socially isolating yourself because you can easily become hypnotized, controlled or dominated by the emotional vampire. Use the emotional vampires as a mirror to understand how they reflect you and why they push your buttons. For example, I once had a close friend who would often freak out over the smallest things, turning them into major dramas and disasters. When I took the time to determine why I would respond with anger, I realized that I would often do the same thing - turn small things into major disasters. I resented in her what I resented in myself. As I changed my behavior and perception of life, her responses had little effect on me and I was able to master the way to handle her, calming her down while not getting emotional myself. ☺

I wish you the best and remind you "Believe in yourself -You deserve the best!" Patrick Wanis Ph.D. Celebrity Life Coach, Human Behavior & Relationship Expert & Clinical Hypnotherapist www.patrickwanis.com